has already been identified for provision of ATM facility. the site preparation is complete and the order for ATM has already been,placed with the vendor. The deliveries are expected within 2 months. The ATM would be operationalised by SBI on delivery of the ATM by the vendor.

**Representation for raising exemption limit of income tax**

4309. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of Members of Parliament have represented for raising the exemption limit of income tax in view of the high rise in prices in the country; and

(b) if so, the action taken or proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The decision of the Government is reflected in the Finance Bill, 1997.

**Proposal for forward trading of Gold and Silver**

4310. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Bullion Merchants' Associations has urged Government to allow forward trading of Gold and Silver in the country to curb price fluctuations and smuggling;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the bullion exchange system throughout the country was closed down in 1963 under the policy of Gold Control Order; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the action proposed to be taken by Government to stabilise the prices of gold and silver in the country *vis-a-vis* the international market to curb smuggling?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) to (c) the information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

**Modernisation of Calcutta Mint**

4311. SHRIMATI CHANDRA KALA PANDEY:
SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether M/s. Micon, which was consultant for modernising the Calcutta Mint, suggested that three blanking lines and two buck furnances be installed in the Mint;

(b) if so, whether this has been implemented; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) to (c) The recommendation of M/s. MECON, who were project consultants for the Mint's modernisation project, have been implemented to the extent approved by the Government.

**Autonomy to State Co-operative Banks in giving credits**

4312. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether NABARD plans to give the State Co-operative Banks autonomy in giving credits;

(b) if so, details thereof; and

(c) the advantage likely to be accrued by giving more autonomy to 360 district level Central Co-operative Banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) to (b) As reported by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Develomment

(NABARD), a number of steps have already been taken by them to impart greater freedom to co-operative institutions in their lending activities. These include, *inter-alia*, relaxations in the relevant provisions under Credit Authorisation Scheme (CAS) in terms of revisions in the specified cut off points for grant of advances to non-credit co-operative societies and working captial support to co-operative sugar factories; widening the scope of lending activities under the CAS; opening up investment avenues for profitable deployment of resources and relaxation in norms for financing individual borrowers.

NABARD has also periodically been taking up with Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for larger allocation of funds to co-operative banks under the consortium arrangements for funding the procurement operations of Food Corporation of India (FCI), Jute Corporation of India (JCI), etc.

The above measures together with a deregulated interest rate structure, have significantly contributed towards creating a liberalised regime for a more flexible and profitable deployment of resources of co-operative institutions, higher efficiency in credit decision making and greater accountablity for such decisions. The mechanism of preparation of Development Action Plans (DAPs) and tri-partite Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) entered into between NABARD, State co-operative Banks and District Central co-operative Banks and district Central Co-operative Banks, is expected to further strengthen the co-operative credit structure.

**Promotion of SSI Sector by SIDBI in Bihar**

4313. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the role played by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) in the promotion of SSI Sector in Bihar;

(b) how many SSI Units were established/revived with the loan provided by SIDBI in the State during the last three years, year-wise;

(c) whether SIDBI proposes to increase its activities in the State; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has been set up to function as the principal financial institution for promotion, financing and development of industries in the small scale sector and to co-ordinate the functions of institutions engaged in similar activities. SIDBI is performing this role all over the country including Bihar. All the schemes under its various direct and indirect assistance programmes are in operation in the state of Bihar.

(b) As per information provided by SIDBI, assistance sanctioned (including assistance for potentially viable sick units) and disbursements made by SIDBI in the State of Bihar during 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 is given below:

(Rs. crores)

| Year | No. | Sanctions | Disbursement |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1993-94 | 272 | 16.45 | 9.34 |
| 1994-95 | 83 | 11.93 | 17.22 |
| 1995-96 | 1122 | 57.90 | 51.95 |

Besides above assistance, under promotional and development schemes, SIDBI has sanctioned Rs. 59.5 lakhs to six voluntary organisations having total membership of 3794 women for onlending to the rural poor under micro credit scheme. SIDBI has also assisted six voluntary organisations for setting up training cum production centres on Madhubani painting, Garments, Tiles manufacturing, etc. Rural industries programme in Bihar has been